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Editorial ☆ Reinventing the Wheel ☆

☆ The Need for a Child-Friendly Pagan Community ☆

☆ Retreat Review ☆ Reporting from the Cauldron ☆

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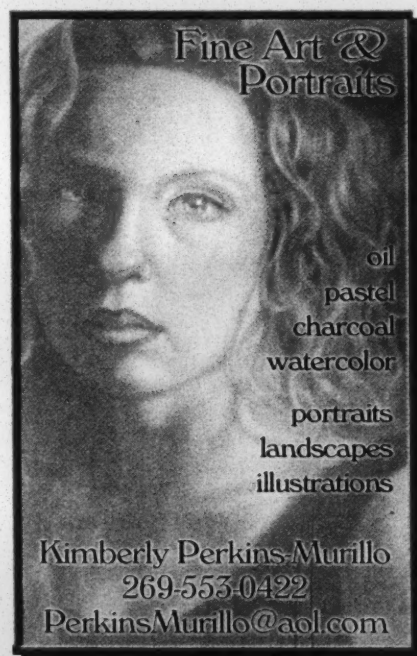
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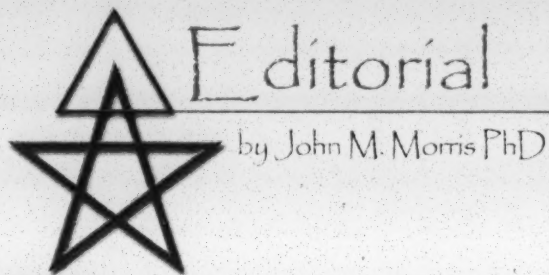
About the Artist

The artist can be contacted on AOL under Ajarhead1@AOL.com. A Vanitru of the Asatru following, he lives and learns to teach the path. Considering himself a grumpy old man in mood, if not actual age, he lives in lower Michigan and considers his dog wiser than any human. His art manifests in sculpture, woodworking, writing, painting, and computer graphics. But he considers life an art form in and of itself.



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by John M. Morris PhD



The Pagan Rainbow

One of the pleasant things about Convocation this year was the realization that many different traditions can work together, without compromise, but with understanding. I was in the merchants' room for nearly all the proceedings there, which meant that I could talk to many very different people, with the realization that our differences were great, but our similarities could draw us together.

In some quieter moments, after the Con, I began to sort out the variety of groups that have come together, in spite of differences. I call our movement Neo-Paganism, fully aware that some people don't like that as a blanket term. In fact, there are a good many that don't want any kind of blanket term for all of us, given the wide spread among us in principles and practices, ranging from the highly formal and impressive rituals of the Ordo Templi Orientis, the OTO, to the fun-filled playfulness of such groups as the Church of All Worlds.

One of my favorites has been Mateyo's passionate recreation of Inca ritual, based on her long study of the religion and several visits to Peru, where local people are attempting to retain the ancient religion of their ancestors, against the encroaching threat of tourism and Western Christianity. High in the Andes, they have been isolated from the ravaging white man's culture, developing beautiful rituals and trance journeys to their Gods and their ancestors.

On the other hand, we've taken part in the highly formal OTO rituals, a very rich amalgam of ancient lore and the intensive explorations and inventions of Aleister Crowley. Rejected for many years, because of wild accusations against him - which were only partly true - Crowley has

proved to be a major inspiration for some of us. We sometimes forget how exciting the times were, during the first half of the twentieth century, when hundred of new religions were being carved out of rituals of the past. Crowley's passionate rituals are among the most powerful that I know.

For a time, a few years ago, there were groups working with Egyptian religion, here in Ann Arbor, as well as in Pontiac, and many other places. On an international level, of course, the Fellowship of Isis maintains an Egyptian tradition, lovely in its beauty and richness, full of strength inherited from ancient Egypt. I have a whole bookshelf full of books on Egyptian religion, which is certainly due for a resurrection. I can remember how much pleasure we had in recreating an old ritual, in which we floated boats, with our prayers on them, down the Huron River, imagining that it was the Nile. A Chicago group presented Egyptian rituals at an earlier ConVocation, but none were given this year.

Another of my favorite groups was missing from the Con, the Faerie tradition from Diana's Grove, out in Central Missouri. This is very much a back-to-nature tradition, with many secrets and beautiful rituals out in the woods.

The Druids were there in force. They've been one of the most active and successful groups in our area, at one time constituting the largest single Druid group in the world. Their rituals, held out in the woods, now that the weather is improving, bring in much of the spirit of the ancient Druids of Northern Europe. When I was visiting Stonehenge, in England, I could imagine the ancient white-robed Druids circling the sacred stones, although local Druids tell me that this is all a myth - the really-real Druids had nothing to do with Stonehenge. But I could still imagine them.

The Pennsylvania Dutch traditions are well represented in our area, although they seem no longer closely tied to Silver Ravenwolf. In any case, a close friend from Flint was there, and described the Pow-Wow tradition of the Pennsylvania farmers, best known for the hex signs on their barns.

The word "Wicca" seems to be dying out, primarily because it has become too narrow a des-

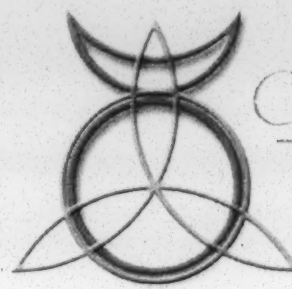
ignation for many of us. It was retrieved during the last century from old English, where it simply designated "witch" or "witchcraft," and is said to have been pronounced in the same way. My own family records, which date back three or four centuries in this country, never mention "Wicca," and the family tradition in which I was trained does not use the word. Nevertheless, it serves as a convenient way of referring to modern Witchcraft, which characterizes many of the groups represented at ConVocation.

Neo-Pagan Witchcraft, or Wicca, is sometimes seen as the dominant tradition among us. There is no doubt that the writings of Scott Cunningham, for example, describe a form of the Craft that many of us would try to follow. There is no better introduction to the Craft than Cunningham's *Wicca: A Guide for the Solitary Practitioner*, together with the many other, more specialized books that he wrote before his tragic death. The Craft that Cunningham describes is very close to the path that many of us are following. Some of the most successful groups in our area are following rituals, magical practices, and spiritual healing that could have been drawn from this tradition, which we can call "eclectic."

I've mentioned several traditions that I know first-hand in this area, but there are many others. Asatru, for example, is based on ancient traditions that have been particularly powerful. As it happens, the local Asatru groups are difficult to locate, and I'm not as familiar with them as with these others. An Asatru priestess up in northern Michigan – as far from here as you can get in this state – publishes a very attractive journal, describing her rather rural group, and I look forward to reading about it, even though it's a little too far to visit from here.

What we can learn from groups like these, coming together at events like Convocation, is that the groups that I've been calling "Neo-Pagan" are varied and exciting, drawn together by a common commitment to religious freedom and the need to explore the worlds of the spirit. We are different, but none of us is convinced that we own the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

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Catalyst Point

by Cather Steincamp

Reinventing the Wheel



When it comes to Pagan Social and Religious Organizations, our community often finds itself reinventing the wheel. Many of the things that the Christian Community relies

on to assist in providing basic services to its members are not available to us, so we have to go back and build our own from scratch. It's a tedious, frustrating, inefficient, and just plain difficult process, but it can't be avoided.

What can be avoided is reinventing the Pagan Wheel.

One of my biggest frustrations with the Pagan Community is that it has a tendency to reinvent wheels that we already have on the road. There's no current way to get an accurate figure, but it wouldn't surprise me to learn that somewhere between a quarter and half of our organizations are wholly redundant, attempting to perform the exact same functions that other Pagan Organizations already in place were designed to do. (I should stress here that I am talking about community-oriented organizations, and not religious organizations-- a wide variety of religious groups is a good thing.)

There are a lot of reasons this happens. I'd say the biggest reason is probably that these organizations are unaware of each other, followed closely by geographic isolation. These particular problems are ones that will solve themselves in time; we are becoming better organized and better connected by the day, and in time I expect that many of these organizations will merge as they become aware of each other. Many more will just die out because the support isn't there for one organization that is performing the same services as another. There will be a Darwinian element to this, and the existing organizations will be stronger for the process.

Another reason is that some organizations are developed in direct competition to other organizations. Often, this is because one or more people are unhappy with how an existing organization is doing things, and a new organization is born to do it better. This, too, has its Darwinian aspects, and isn't always unhealthy. However, it isn't always necessary; I've spoken with many Pagan leaders who have found themselves in such competition with others over complaints that had never been voiced to them. I would encourage anyone thinking of taking such an action to make every effort to work with the existing organizations they would attempt to supplant. This doesn't always work, but the attempt should be made, and the complainant should be willing to accept a reasonable compromise. These redundant organizations frequently find themselves no better equipped to handle the problem they were created to solve, having learned the hard way that their major complaint was the result of an unconsidered practical reality rather than ineptitude or unwillingness to address the issue.

There are many more reasons for this duplication of effort and division of resources, and most of them are understandable: concurrent development, similar methods with different goals, similar goals with different methods... the list goes on. Some of these reasons could be avoided, some are inevitable. It may not always be the best for the community, but it's unrealistic to expect that it won't happen.

However, going into competition with an existing organization is something that should only be done as an absolute last resort. First of all, such a split can be hazardous to the community or communities in which the organizations work. If the new organization has any degree of success the community becomes divided-- and each of the organizations has to work twice as hard. While the average Pagan is likely to be perfectly willing to attend two events-- assuming they don't conflict, schedule wise-- they're not going to be interested in backing two organizations with volunteer time or their Pagan dollars. This means that each organization has to work harder, and with less resources, to accomplish their goals. This can cause both organizations to fail, or greatly reduce one organization's ability to get the job done while the other organization is not capable of picking

up the slack. On top of that, such things generally stir up resentment and hostility in the community. Most of the time, nobody wins and everybody loses.

If you are in a community that finds itself in this situation, ask the new organization some questions: The first and foremost question should be "Why?" There are good answers to this question; perhaps their methods are similar but their overall goals are different, or vice versa. Perhaps there is a specific problem with the existing organization-- in this case, the new organization should be prepared to explain their objections.

Have they attempted to work with the existing organization to redress their grievances? If the answer is no, they're calling their own leadership ability into question; there's no good reason to start a fight without trying to address the issue diplomatically. If the answer is yes, they should be prepared to explain what they did to try to fix their problems. Also, they should be prepared to explain why this issue is important enough to justify the problems that such a schism can cause. Is it really worth risking a split in the community? Have they talked to the community to see if the issue is important enough to the community at large?

Is this new organization better equipped to perform this service? The answer to this-- as given by the new organization-- is almost certainly "yes," but they should be willing to illustrate their point. (Truthfully, if the answer is "no," you're dealing with some hardcore honesty, which is good, but they'd better be prepared to explain why they're going ahead with it anyway.) Is this new organization better structured? Are the people running it better qualified?

Has this new organization attempted to work with the existing organization to see if each can do their thing without stepping on each other's toes? Perhaps the two organizations can find a way to work together for the good of the community. The two groups might be able to negotiate a compromise that allows them to share resources instead of dividing them, and both organizations may be able to work towards their goals without getting in each other's hair. They may even be able to help each other directly, with cross-promotion and cooperation. Here, some of the responsibility falls on the existing organization-- just because it was there first

doesn't relieve it of its responsibility to work for the good of the community. An organization that isn't willing to at least consider a compromise is going to be continually facing challenges in the community until it learns to do so, or dies. The new organization, however, should not pretend that compromise means "give me everything I want."

I think each member of the community is responsible for asking these questions, and evaluating the answers for themselves. We as a community are responsible for what the organizations we support do. Sometimes these things can lead to nasty power struggles-- sometimes that's even the goal. Well, okay, nobody wants a power struggle, but some people want to seize power and are willing to fight for it. There may be a perfectly good reason for such a conflict-- or the conflict may have never been the intent. Sometimes a legitimate move is turned into a power struggle by an organization that feels threatened, or is perceived as one because the newcomer doesn't consider the possibility that their actions might be viewed as such.

It's also important that these questions are asked tactfully; don't ask them what gives them the right to do this-- just calmly and respectfully ask their reasons. Don't start with the assumption that there is no good answer, and be prepared to accept the possibility that the new group isn't competing at all, or there's a decent reason for the competition. Similarly, those involved with the new organization should be prepared for these questions, and not take them personally. Sure, it might seem like their character and motives are being called into question, and perhaps they are... but this is an opportunity to clear up any misunderstandings on these issues. An intelligent and reasoned response will go a long way towards giving an organization credibility, while anything else is going to hurt the group in the long run, even if the questions were asked in an accusatory and disrespectful manner. (Besides, let's face it, any organization in the Pagan Community is going to need to be able to withstand a few potshots, or it's not going to last very long.)

Our community is gathering momentum at a rate that's nothing short of impressive, especially when you consider that we have had to reinvent the wheel in so many cases. But we still have

limited road space, and if we get too many wheels rolling, it can cause a bottleneck that slows everyone down. New groups should check local traffic before getting on the road, and everyone-- leaders, followers, movers, shakers, participants, and passengers-- should think before they get behind a wheel.

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The need for a child friendly pagan community

Young children have a natural affinity for magic and things unseen.

Unfortunately in today's society that affinity is lost too soon, especially when peer pressure starts in kindergarten and fantasy and pretend play is seen as being "baby play" by age 7. The love of fantasy and magic and connection to nature is what drew many of us to the religion we practice today. Wouldn't it have been wonderful if we could have found a support system that encouraged those loves, rather than belittled them, back when we still had that connection to them as "real"?

Being part of a community that respects balance, the environment, and healing ways to work with energy will help children grow into adults who continue to redefine and rework that respect into their communities no matter what religious path they choose. Although those beliefs must start at home, they also need to be reinforced by the community. However, that cannot be done until the community also creates a place for these children to belong, and contribute.

Unfortunately, many pagan parents find themselves working alone in the "religious" upbringing of their children. This creates many challenges for the parent such as:

- ✱ How do I help my children feel they are not alone in our religious choice?

- ✱ How can I introduce my child to other pagan children
- ✱ How do I show my child there are both male and female witches (this is a dilemma mainly if you are the only pagan parent and your children are of a different gender)
- ✱ How do I teach my child to work as part of a religious group
- ✱ How do I teach my child what is expected of them when working in a group circle

The primary answer to all of these is to expose your child to the pagan community. Sounds easy right?

But how do you expose them to a community in which they have no place to "fit-in" or call their own?

Circles provide both a social and a spiritual community for most pagans - they are the place where we come together to share and celebrate our beliefs and ourselves.

For most parents in any religion, taking your child to share in the religious celebration of the holidays is the first step in teaching them how to be a part of the religion and the community it creates. Hence taking your child to circle would be his or her primary introduction to becoming part of the community

I have heard many pagans (both with and without children) complain about how distracting it is for them to have children at a circle. And I know first hand how distracting a baby crying or a child running around can be. (Both to the parent and to the group).

It is up to the parent to decide if and when their child is ready for group work, and if their child becomes a distraction it is up to the parent to remove the child so others can focus. This, of course, is a catch 22: without exposure to circle children can not learn to "behave" appropriately, but that learning, like all other learning, is a process and takes time. Children by nature like to ask questions, and need to move around, especially if they are young children (between the ages of 3 years to about 7 or 8 years, depending on the child and their personality).

The dilemma this creates for many pagan parents is, "How can I be a part of the community now that I have children?". Some of you may think the answer is simply to hire a babysitter. Sounds good enough, but in reality it does not always work. It is difficult to find a teen you can trust, and in this day and age, many do not live close to extended family that would be willing to baby-sit. Another factor that plays in is whether your family supports your religious choice, or do you just lie about where you are going?

Editors note: And for some families, leaving children with a sitter is neither a financial nor a philosophical option.

So the pagan parents, who face the dilemmas of finding reliable childcare, tend to just drop out of the community and become solitary.

I speak to many parents in this situation daily on a pagan parenting board and many of us struggle with raising our pagan children without a physical community. Unfortunately we are spread out across the country and cannot be more than a cyber-community. We have been spending time brainstorming how to make our personal communities more "child friendly" without our children being a "distraction", and these are some of the ideas we have come up with:

- ✱ Parents with young children, or older children who are not ready to be part of an adult circle, can take turns babysitting. Preferably at a space close to where the circle is being held so if there is a problem, and a parent needs to be contacted they are close by.
- ✱ Create family circles. Family circles can be held on the same day as the adult circle, but done earlier in the day, and written in a way that the children can be actively involved. They would need to be shorter than an average circle and could have some type of craft activity for the children to do. They might even incorporate learning activity centers based on the holiday, the elements, and the goals of the circle. This way the children can have a hands on

approach to learning about the gods, goddesses, and elements involved in the holiday celebration. By this I mean, setting up a water activity, an earth activity, an air activity, and a fire activity in the appropriate directions, give the children a chance to play in each area and then gather for a story time. The story explains the holiday. Then do a very short circle so that the children can learn how they should behave when they are old enough to join in the adult circle or have a circle of their own (with adult guidance).

- ✱ Create open-ended "play groups", family outings etc. so that those of us with children can get together and talk about the issues and concerns we face. More importantly, it lets our pagan children know they are not alone in the belief system in which they are being raised. I know my sons have had trouble understanding that children can be witches too, since the only witches they know are myself, their Faery goddess parents and my on-line pagan friends.
- ✱ Offer "classes" to the children while the adults are at circle. Again like the babysitting, the supervising and planning the classes could rotate through a group of volunteers who would be willing to celebrate the holiday/moon phase by sharing their talents and gifts with the children.

Granted it is primarily up to the parents to raise their children as pagans, but it is also up to the community to help support those parents and the children when needed.

Here are some ways in which I personally could use support and ideas from others with or without children in the community.

- 1) As a mom of boys, I struggle with ways to

introduce my sons to the "hunter" aspect of the gods, and with how to provide a more "masculine" view of the religion in general.

- 2) I would love to have someone with a natural affinity for music or art help my children to explore these avenues to connecting with the god and goddess.

- 3) Just by introducing children to other witches, and by those witches sharing their gifts with the community, it will allow the children to grow and understand who they are, it will help them in discovering what spirituality means to them, and how they can become spiritual beings with a definable connection to the gods, goddesses, elements, and the world around them.

Pagan parents need to come out of the woodwork and help build the type of community that will support them, and their children while respecting and supporting the needs of those without children as well. And we ask that those of you without children to help and support us as we do so - after all that is what being part of a community is all about.

Ostara activities for the young

These are some of the activities I do with my 4-year-old twins to help celebrate the coming of Spring.

- ✱ *Signs of spring nature walk* - We head outside and look for signs of spring - green grass, crocus poking up through the earth, baby pine trees, and leaf buds on the trees. We also take time to listen for birds singing and to watch for birds at our feeders.
 - ✱ *Planning our garden/planting seeds indoors* - The boys love to help me plan our garden, We take time going through plant catalogs and make lists of the plants we like, so that when the weather is warm enough we can go to the garden shop and buy starter plants. We also purchase the seed starter kits and begin our garden indoors.
- The boys love to help drop the seeds into the soil pouches and watch daily for signs of growth.

- ✱ We also "plant" some of the seeds in plastic bags with wet paper towels and hang them in their bedroom window. This allows them to actually see what is going on under the soil before the shoots begin to push up through the earth. (You can also plant the seeds in a plastic cup with paper towels - Sunflowers, pop-corn and beans work best for this type of activity).

- ✱ Create a welcome spring collage - I love making "sticky paper" collages!

You will need :

- ❖ contact paper (we use clear - that way you can cover it with another sheet and still see the collage if needed)
- ❖ images of spring, either drawn, cut from magazines, or foam shapes (can be bought in craft stores - they come in flowers, butterflies and dragon flies, eggs, bunnies, chicks - etc) or spring time confetti (if you use the confetti I suggest making the collage on a table rather than hanging the paper on the wall), "Easter" grass (like for baskets)

Steps

1. Cut a large piece of contact paper and tape it to a wall - sticky side facing out
2. Give you child the spring images you have collected and let them stick them to the paper
3. Cover with a 2nd sheet of sticky paper if you do not want the images to be pulled off or fall off over time.

- ✱ set up an Ostara family altar (ours consists of plastic eggs, a stuffed bunny, a toy horse (to represent Epona - as the maiden aspect of the goddess), and egg, flower, bunny or sun shaped candles or candle holders if we can't find the candles. If we take photos on our Signs of Spring

walk we will place those on the altar as well..

Set up an Ostara tree -

You will need

- ❖ a small but sturdy fallen tree branch - with several small branches for hanging things
- ❖ small wooden, plastic, or home made paper spring decorations (we bought a wooden set that consists of flowers, gardening tools, eggs, bunnies, butterflies etc).
- ❖ ribbon
- ❖ a sturdy flower pot
- ❖ planters' foam (a styrofoam block to use in the pot to support the branch)
- ❖ silk flowers or moss

Steps

1. Place the planters foam in a flower pot (you can decorate the pot ahead of time with fabric, drawings, or objects glued on)
2. Wrap ribbon around the tree branch to decorate the "trunk" and branches
3. Place the tree branch in the pot
4. Decorate the tree branches with your spring time decorations
5. Place silk flowers, moss and other objects in the foam to cover and decorate the base of the tree.

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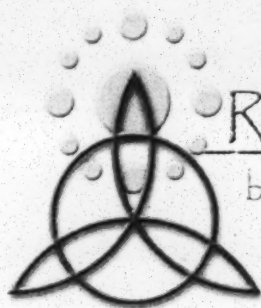
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by Deborah Garrett

Isla Women's Retreat

By Deborah Garrett

The night sky is bright with stars and the air is sweet with the smell of the sea. The procession of women makes their way across the land bridge to the temple. The sun rises to greet the Yucatan on the left and Mother Moon says her morning good-byes on the right. We each make our own private dedications as we step through the portal into the actual temple. As I close my eyes I can see the ancient Mayan women getting off their boats at what appears to be the ruins of a dock below. I am drawn to what's left of a lunar observatory or altar. One of the women in our group dances at an outcropping, chanting, her beautiful scarves blowing in the wild sea breeze.

These are just a few of the wonderful images I brought home with me from a recent Women's retreat to Isla Mujeres, an island off of Cancun.

This enchanted island was one of a three-stop pilgrimage made by Mayan women, and is dedicated to the Mayan Goddess, Ixchel. A Moon Goddess associated with rites of fertility, weaving, and healing.

The retreat is a 7 day adventure hosted by Co-Madres Ceci McDonnell (The statuesque Mother Goddess who brings her children together to light their torches and send them forth) and Karen Rosenberg (the bi-lingual amazement who organizes details-a woman who is nourishing in the truest sense of the word!) Both are therapists from the Cleveland area.

The retreat is hosted at a resort called Na Balam, a beautiful resort with food that can only be re-

ferred to as works of art. The Guacamole is the stuff of legend! The staff is warm and friendly. The beaches are inviting. The gentle sounds of the surf are my lullaby each night. This was the fifth year the retreat was held at this location.

The daily circles, yoga sessions, and just plain craziness are held at a covered *palapa*-- a room with a thatched roof, open to the exotic birds singing, the palms, and the flowers.

The circles were at times deep, at times playful, but skillfully designed to open our hearts to our inner-beauty and creativity. We each had the opportunity to contribute to a weaving done on a portable loom. A gift that was presented to Ceci at the closing "ceremonies", which contained a little piece of each of us.

The women were brought together from all over the country, and each contributed her own amazing gifts. Beauty, talent, intellect, and humor were in no short supply with this bunch, characterized by a variety of religious backgrounds, but with an abiding respect for them all. We did every thing from calling the 4 quarters to lighting a candle for Sabbath on the beach.

One of the things I liked most was that this was an opportunity to really get to know the people who lived on the island. There is a local group of women who have formed a bead collective. They make beaded medicine bags, necklaces, and bracelets, and the proceeds go to support a local children's clinic. We were asked by Karen to bring a donation of beads for the coop. One of the women from our group, our *Goddess of Chocolate*, Kelly, put the word out at her place of employment, and had a suitcase of beads for these women! The looks of warmth and gracious gratitude on their faces as they accepted the gifts is a memory that I will carry with me for quite a long time.

Painted on the building at the coop, was a Spiral Goddess. The antiquity of the Goddess, and the fact that her face is everywhere, as evidenced by the faces of these beautiful women, truly struck me.

We also met an American who lives on the Island 6 months of the year. Maggie is from Wisconsin and is the wife of a retired fireman. She has cleared land on the island, and built a school to teach the locals English. Learning English

greatly increases their earning potential, thus increasing their standard of living.

A deep sense of gratitude is also something I came away with. There is a wonderful and very skilled seamstress on the island named Hortencia. You pick out one of the brightly colored cloths, she eyeballs it for measurement, and can make you any piece of clothing imaginable. We were all sporting our "Hortencia's" by the end of the week.

She invited us all to her very warm little cubicle--picture a space at an open air flea market--where she had her sewing machine. She gave us all a gift and thanked us, because the money we had spent on her treasures had paid her daughter's tuition at the local school for a year!

We also visited a local cemetery. It was like something out of a storybook. All the grave-stones are above ground, with small glass boxes or cement enclosures acting as altars on them. Some of them are actually wired for electricity, so that their light can shine perpetually. We came across a family sitting at a gravesite singing to their deceased ancestor.

The only thing I could possibly mention as a drawback is getting to the Island. You fly into Cancun, which is definitely not the most efficient airport. The tourist population has grown so quickly that the airport is having a difficult time keeping up with it. Then you take a van or cab ride to Porto Juarez, If you choose the less expensive route, and take the \$12.00 van ride, it may take a while, depending on other stops to drop off other passengers. From Puerto Juarez, it is a 20-minute ferry ride to the island. From there you're within walking distance -- or a brief cab ride -- from Na Balam. Worth the walk, but tiring.

I would advise cool comfortable clothing. You're seated on comfortable blankets and back supporting chairs, but still you get on the floor in the palapa for the circles and yoga sessions. Most of us brought "resort casual" clothes for dinner.

Na Balam also has massage available at an outdoor cabana. While I did not get signed up in time, many took advantage of Maria Louisa's shaman-like skills and use of aromatherapeutic oils.

Each of you who joined me on this journey, accept my respect and admiration. I wish that I could put it into words and honor each of you for what you brought to me. But there are too many words. I suppose *Namaste* will have to do!

There are plans to schedule the retreat for next March, and it may be expanded to include day trips to other sacred sites. Please check out the web site at www.islawomensretreat.com for updated and more in-depth information.

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Media Review

By John M. Morris, Ph.D.

CANDACE SAVAGE. *WITCH: THE WILD RIDE FROM WICKED TO WICCA*. LONDON: BRITISH MUSEUM PRESS, 2000. 128 PP.

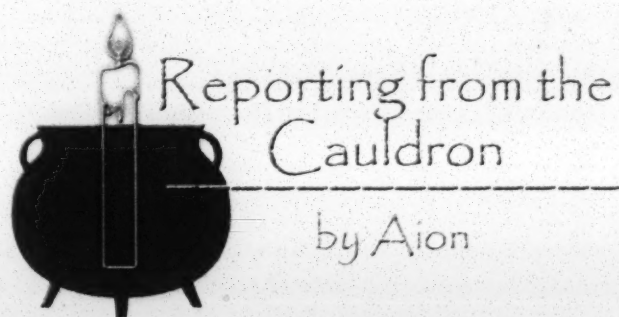
This is an attractive collection of pictures from the history of witchcraft, beginning around 1600 and continuing down through the last century. The text, unfortunately, is as highly biased as any of the research that it attacks, presenting witchcraft as no more than the fantasies of its opponents. The possibility that any of the accused witches of the past could actually have been healers, midwives, or magic workers does not seem to be enter into this very sketchy history.

Thus we assume that Margaret Murray's much maligned history of witchcraft is the only source for modern versions of the craft, as we utterly ignore such figures as Gerald Gardner or Aleister Crowley, or any of their friends. Starhawk's feminist Wicca, which prefers to talk only to women, is taken as the single example of contemporary versions of the Craft. None of the many pictures shows any real, live witch.

While the author complains of the various biases among earlier writers on the Craft, her own biases make this another among the contentious writings that attempt to trace our complex and

checkered history. The pictures, however, show how strange the popular view of Witchcraft can be. Unfortunately, the text itself is broken into fragments by the many sidebars and picture captions that interrupt the flow at every opportunity. It's as though the author herself had serious doubts about the value of her story. And the British Museum simply wants to sneer at the supposed naiveté of us Witches.

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Reporting from the Cauldron

Convocation Report

I have just driven back from my first visit to the Convocation convention, a pagan event in Troy, Michigan, and I was duly impressed. The fact that there is such an event and has been one for ten years now is in itself an outstanding achievement for our rites.

Consider, if you are from Michigan, or any other of the Midwestern states, this sort of event could not be held outside in the winter months due to the weather. Also such conveniences as hot running water, private indoor restrooms, individual sleeping arrangements, and various meeting room facilities came with the conference arrangements, since it was held at the Hilton hotel in Troy, just off hwy 75. Another consideration is, if one were to share with others in expenses one could easily afford to spend the weekend if one is planning on attending the whole conference in 'at home' comfort. For those who were there for the just the day, there were restaurants, comfortable seating, and public restrooms within easy reach.

Although this may seem trivial, for some of us "heathens" who are in need of easy and quick access to such accommodations as plumbing, comfortable seating, and the protection of a

building with everything in one location, it was wonderful. Okay it is great to be outside with the "elements" and to have that connection to the natural world -- but I have to face the reality that I am not the spring chicken I once was, and I am not able to forge through the constructs of nature as I have in the past -- and as I honestly wish I still could.

But this brings up another subject that might be a consideration for the pagan community in its attempt to serve its constituents. For the merchants who had brought their hand crafted wares to be displayed and hopefully sold at this gathering (of which there were many great things --and I have the receipts to prove it) the solid ground of the hotel floor, the lighting, and electrical outlets that enhance their display efforts were available, and the worry of being rained on is eliminated.

Another plus was to have rooms to sit comfortably and listen lectures by various pagan presenters. Okay, so there were no "obvious" areas for the community fire to be kindled and to dance around the flames -- but there were drumming circles and other ritual events available. I did not have the opportunity to attend any of them, much to my dismay, as other obligations called me away. Hopefully next year I will plan better.

For those who have physical limitations, these accommodations were very welcome. My compliments to the committee for its organization and handling of this event!

I had not adequately planned to attend Convocation, so because of my lack of organization and ignorance I did not have the chance to attend more than one of the lectures.

Diversity in the Pagan Community

The lecture I did attend was presented by an old friend and author A.J. Drew from Columbus, OH. He was discussing the constructs of Wicca. My interest in hearing this discussion goes beyond a one-dimensional interest. To present the contents of diversity within the "pagan" community without causing dissent is my purpose and, I am assuming, was A.J.'s. Let's try to break it down and maybe you, too, can be involved in this discussion.

For now the questions boil down into:

❖ "What does the term Wicca, Heathen or

Pagan mean?"

- ❖ *"What are the differences and the similarities?"*
- ❖ *"Are all pagans heathens, are all witches pagan and what is a magi or shaman?"*
- ❖ *"Do all pagans shape shift, use herbalism, crystals, spells, or clairvoyant tendencies in their belief, and astral-projection how about that one?"*
- ❖ *"Are there certain circumstances under which some methods are more effective?"*
- ❖ *"Is there such a thing as a bad pagan or a bad witch, or a bad Christian or Jew for that matter?"*

Defining Our Terms

An interesting side bar is that these questions are being discussed under other circumstances in our lives this February 2004 c.e. "How?" you ask.

In just a few days, on February 25, Ash Wednesday, a new movie will be hitting the big screen about the last hours of Jesus Christ's life. Ash Wednesday is considered a symbolic Christian day, although it is amusing and interesting that this is also Ash month, on a Celtic lunar calendar -- or so I was informed. I have read so in other lore and cross-referenced it from more than one source, and I therefore I have tended to accept it as reliable data. But I digress, Ash Wednesday, a Christian event, and once again charges of religious differences and misunderstanding and anti-Semitism are being interjected into the picture (no pun intended).

Can we please stop with the religious rhetoric? It's not even systematically related to the issues. In my opinion this is an old, old conflict/war... "been there, done that, have the lifetimes, scars, and enough horrors to deal with on that, do not need to do it again" syndrome.

Why is the story of the divine child only discussed from the Judeo-Christian theology again? I am not Jewish nor am I a Christian. I was not raised in a standard version of either of these two mainstream, western religious beliefs. My family had a diversity of religion within its own home and so I was never schooled in any particular faith. So does this then make me a heathen, pagan or witch, from birth if not by birth?

We were discussing the differences between a pagan and a heathen, so I feel it might help to

look at the conflicts from a different point of view -- within the different constructs in the Jewish and the Christian faith -- and what they are and how they have influenced the words we now use to define the debate.

In my studies from an outsider's view (a secular view of religion) I say that these two major western religions over the ages have very different concepts in their followings and teachings, and differences in the language that is used, and the subject of contention becomes embroiled in the wording.

Usually one starts at the *beginning*
..creation....alpha ...but those are, again, words.

Alpha is Greek for beginning. But Greek civilization was not the first written history of humankind and, furthermore, the Greeks worshipped more than one deity.

So, again, why do we discuss what a pagan is from the constructs of the Judeo-Christian theology? Perhaps because of fear of exposure or fear of reprisal or another "witch hunt"/ McCarthyism type fever might emerge. By any name, is still just as hateful and deadly.

Are all the stories of the witch persecutions a falsehood? Not just the Salem, Massachusetts occurrences -- that was a minor situation compared to the years of discrimination in other countries. When the assessments of demonic possession were raised, who and what where the deciding factors in their proof of the evil "witches" existence? The hammer of Witches, a decree by Christian believers. See a pattern here?

A well-known tactic in the overtaking of a culture, religion, or faith is to turn the native deities into an evil or threatening principle, to be overtaken by the new pantheon.

So we are back to AJ Drew and the constructs of Wicca, which he was discussing in his lecture at ConVocation, and the ensuing conversation, during which I heard the comment that Wicca is only 50 years old. I was again confused. Is this the same belief that I have traced back into Egypt, before there were the words -- in the form of the Ten Commandments -- that came down from the mountain given to Moses by this God?

Yet Moses was Hebrew, or so their story goes.

And this Christ character was not even born yet, so we aren't we confusing some links here on the time line, if we are working chronologically.

The symbols of Christianity are for one based on a theology built worship of the son/father/holy ghost relationship, a trinity, and formulated in the Piscean age.

(Which honors another use of symbols set in the construct of a circle, the wheel of the zodiac, astrological references, another ancient art, from which this Christ is represented by the Piscean age and is symbolizes by the fish. The fish also the sign used by the Christian to denote their son of god.)

I see no problem with this, except when it comes to the other participants in this myth or circle, the mother, brothers, sisters, daughters, sons, and lovers of this Christian man who was, by birth, Jewish. How are they brought forward into the story? Even mankind, which is supposed to be a great creation of God's, is born in sin because of Eve and the Garden of Eden and the serpent in the tree. Ask the Jewish people about the other woman in Adam's life -- Lillith. What symbol is used for these participants in the creation? Are they are not allowed to be anything other than underlings to this one divine son, and his father? Okay, this divine child is only 2000 or so years old about the time it takes to move through one sign or age on the astrological calendar, based on a solar calendar.

So back to the question of the term pagan or witch or heathen. I suggest that the witch concept goes much farther back than 50 years, and my further contention is witchcraft does not find its origins in Wicca or witchcraft, as they are defined in the recent book *The Triumph Of The Moon, A History Of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*, an historical accounting by Ronald Hutton, which I had just finished reading for myself, and is another part of wanting to hear A.J. Drew's comments on the same matter. Hutton, a professor in England, attributes the witchcraft phase to the British occultism societies and to their pathways.

There are many religious beliefs based on a motif of the divine son who comes to, is born from, or is on this earth, other than the one called the story of the Christ. There are other deities that have held domain in the oldest of tales. Tales of long before the one sun/son, so while I am refer-

ring to the sun theos, other mythologies have had their son gods as well. We might incorporate the theology of the solar zodiac and the sign of Leo, a fire sign represented by a lion, or the bull, a earth sign. These symbols also represent an older religious mythology, but the way the word myth is used often brings misconceptions. The mythologies of ancient cultures are a telling of their beliefs, so why is a myth is represented as a lie, not as the truth?

Watch the first part of the movie "Once Upon A Time In Mexico" in which Cheech Marin talks to Johnny Debb about the myth of El Mariachi -- that sums it up. It has been embellished over the years, to the point that some details become obscured but, nevertheless, the man existed.

It seems as though, in America, we have turned our backs on the works of men like Joseph Campbell, a mythologist. Many people consider myths to be like fairytales. They assume that they are not real...just pretend, figments of day-dreams or nightmares.

This presents the discussion as to word usage and how the word is conveyed.

I take the liberty of commenting, in what I hope Dr Campbell might find suitable.

Campbell Might respond that "Well, actually, yes. Some characteristics of fairytales and myths can be compared. For instance, in their true visibility or essence, until properly summoned, is obscured. But is that not true, as is the answer to any complex situation, there is more than one factor to be considered. Fairytales are more equated with, but not limited to, the realm of the east and, therefore, the sylphs might speak for that quarter better than I, even with Campbell's help.

So maybe Wicca/witchcraft has more than one definition. But then the word "witch" might have more than one definition, depending on the theos of the symbol and the eon.

It is possible to look for the opposite, the contrast, the 'other' that takes you out of yourself but does not separate you. With this, have we taken the step from The Fool to The Magician of the tarot cards? But wait, what are those elements on the table in front of the magician and over his head is the sign of what? Infinity. (Just out of curiosity, when Buzz Lightyear in "Toy

Story" says "to infinity' and beyond" -- what is beyond infinity?)

Therefore we need to use words and symbols without harming others, and stop implying that one construct of the term is adequate.

Back before A.J. Drew wrote his first book, he and I used to get into heated arguments in his store in order to challenge each other to do what I am now challenging each of you to do: *CHECK IT OUT!* Check it out before you accept it as the correct or only accounting of the story or fairy-tale.

This is one way that I have to give credence to the concept of degrees as having a purpose or significance. The degree to which you seek out the answer(s) is the degree to which you are aware of it's potentialities. The presumed 'one meaning' is limiting in its degree of worth when no other or different degrees of meaning within the one are sought.

Great Odin, father of the Nordic people, do they desecrate the cross by making it a wood frame of torture and death as opposed to the tree of enlightenment? Forgive them Father, for they know not what they do!

This cross that Odin used, as do others in mythology, as the symbol of his rebirth or enlightenment, the hanged man of the tarot cards. Why do the Christians and others turn this into a violent and agonizing piece of death?

The cross becomes the crucified Christ on an item of horror and torture. Ancient ones please make this stop!!

God & Goddess, bless us all. Make them allow this child of Mary, called The Christ, free from his pain and welcomed into the cauldrons of the ancients away from this pain and misery.

As the words of the Lord are the words of the Lady as well, and so conjoined they bring blessedness.

Let this horror stopwhere is the goddess Aphrodite, the goddess of love and her divine son or was she too turned into the fallen and heathen

woman of sexuality?

How is the female component in the relationship of the Christian theos portrayed? The mother, the wife, the lover, the daughter, the sister, when has Christianity used the words of the Lord and Lady the same way a pagan would or does unless we examine the words.....

Or did I miss a class in Wicca 101? The Lord, as in the cult of Christ. Okay, again here is a heads up on terms -- they do not translate the same from one language to another. The words of their Lord and his disciples are not the words of all Lords and Ladies. Where are all the women's studies students out there that can tell me the story of the origin of the word *virgin* from other than a male constructed point of view.

Okay, so the women in this savior Christ of the Christian faith's where are the females and how are they depicted? Lets look at them. Jesus Christ was a human being, born of an earth mother under questionable circumstances. As to

how this woman got pregnant with this child, given that she was still a virgin. Okay, the word virgin, does not translate the same here from one religion to another.

Mel Gibson, the man who played Braveheart, when he was interviewed on TV referred to the occultism of the Hitler regime and its connection to the Nordic and its Wotan mythology. Talk about anti-Semitic, how about anti-pagan? Occult translates to what?

As with Wotan, who is one great father god of a Germanic or Nordic tradition or mythology, who has also given/brought his sons and daughters to this earth, same as some of the other sky sun gods and, yes folks, goddesses. Let me see there was Eros

the son of Aphrodite, who came to love Psyche, a mortal woman. And here we are, back to the myths or a book about it, like " the golden ass". Again, not just 50 years ago or British of origin.

Still with me?

A.J., at the conference, discussed the Concept of Four sometimes called "*the four directions*" and how these four elements can be traced back into

Great Odin, father of the Nordic people, do they desecrate the cross by making it a wood frame of torture and death as opposed to the tree of enlightenment? Forgive them Father, for they know not what they do!

cultures across ages, to show a concept of these four having a universal meaning, how from nothing they became one and divided and were two and then becoming the four and therein making a square for some and a circle for others, or maybe even a squaring of the circle, but these are not words per se' ... these are, again, the symbols like those two lines that cross in the middle and make other symbolic reference like a plus sign or the cross of some faiths they have similarities and contrasts and connections that are not only one way.

So, when comparing the cross as used in the story of Jesus Christ and how he is seen on this object being tortured and crucified, this is not the same one as used by that Germanic or Nordic god Odin. Yet in the interview with Diane Sawyer, Mr. Gibson referred to these as the evil occultists who came from the Wotan mythology, and then of all the cruel insults, assumed that this led Germans to the evil of Hitler's treatment of the Jews. What about the rest of the people that died or were tortured over the ages for their religious beliefs? From my perch this is farther back than 50 years or the British witchcraft of Hutton's theory, but again CHECK IT OUT! Read up on some of this and then let's talk. I will be waiting at the crossroads,

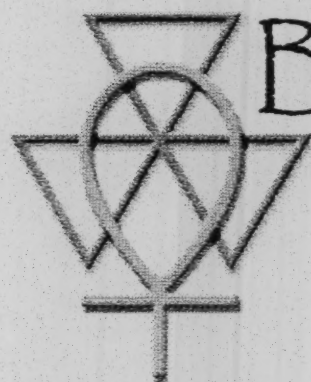
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Priscilla is in our healing bowls here at the Seeker Journal, and we very much hope that her health and with it her column, **Magickal Children**, will return in time for the May issue.



In the News with David Burwaser will, we hope, return in May.



Bulletin Board

While we believe listings on our bulletin board to be correct at the time of publication, you would do well to check with the sponsors before traveling any great distance to listed events.

To list your event free (100 words or less), contact *The Seeker Journal* (seeker@seekerjournal.org). Please specify: type of event, date and time, location, and contact information. **Contact information must be provided.**

)(Classes)(

Class	Day/Time	Description	Location	Contact
Earth Centered Traditions	Second and Fourth Mondays	Eclectic Pagan and Earth-centered spirituality group offering group study, workshops, activities, and open ritual. UU Church, off Abbott Road behind the Public Library.	East Lansing, Michigan	Delta@acd.net , or (517) 339-2796
Circle of the Twelve Oaks	3 rd Wed. 7-9 p.m.	Location varies, as do subjects. Circle of the Twelve Oaks.	West of Detroit, MI	brown_wren@hotmail.com
Witchcraft 101 & 102	Contact sponsor	Weekly Meetings at Isle of Avalon, 412 E. Fourth Street	Royal Oak, Michigan	(248) 336-8228
Federation of Circles and Solitaries	Contact sponsor	The Downriver group, The Federation of Circles and Solitaries, holds seasonal rituals and weekly classes. "This is a very relaxed fellowship circle and a whole lot of fun." No alcohol, drugs, or weapons allowed at Federation events. Circles are held rain or shine. Classes must be paid for in advance, and openings are limited.	South of Detroit, MI	Greg@ (800) 312-3522 or see our web site www.FOCASMI.org

)(Weekly Events)(

Event	Day/Time	Description	Location	Contact
Monthly Gathering	Sundays 2-4 p.m.	E-Groups meet for discussion. Denny's, 715 44 th St. SW at US-131, Wyoming MI 49509. Sanctuary of the Silver Moon.	Grand Rapids	Grsotsm@yahoogroups.com
Earth Centered Traditions	Second and Fourth Mondays, 7 p.m.	Eclectic Pagan and Earth-centered spirituality group offering group study, workshops, activities, and open ritual. Unitarian Universalist Church, 855 Grove St. (off Abbott Road), behind the Public Library	East Lansing, MI	Delta@acd.net or (517) 339-2796.
Pagan Coffee Night	Tuesdays, 7 p.m.	Informal weekly discussion/networking/social/ support meetings. PO Box 614, Houghton MI 49913.	Houghton, MI	Hearth@mailcity.com http://pages.whowhere.com/community/hearth
Wiccan Journey	Wednesdays 7:30 p.m.	A discussion group centered around exploring Wiccan ideas and beliefs. MSU Union	East Lansing, Michigan	Jason Mankey, solivictus@yahoo.com
Shamanic Journeys	Wednesdays 7:30 p.m.	Weekly trance-journeys to distant realms of the spirit for healing, divination, personal transformation. Inter-Cooperative Council Education Center, 1522 Hill St. (behind 1520). Please park on nearby side streets.	Ann Arbor, MI	(734) 665-3522 or e-mail jmm@cyberspace.org
Green Spiral	Every other Wednesday.	Green Spiral is a discussion and networking group for Pagan students at Michigan State and folks in the surrounding Lansing area. We welcome people of all ages and stages of learning. Meetings are every other Wednesday, year-round. Visit our web site or drop us an email for more information!	East Lansing, Michigan	Pagan@pilot.msu.edu http://www.msu.edu/~pagan/
Pagan Chat Nights	Thursdays 7:30 p.m.	Federation of Circles and Solitaries. An hour of mix and mingle, followed by an hour of discussion on a new topic each week Somethin's Brewin', 15371 Dix-Toledo Road	Southgate, Michigan	Greg @ (800) 312-3522 or www.FOCASMI.org
Crystal Treasures Workshops	Fridays, 7 p.m.	Discuss the topics you want to discuss with like-minded individuals. 104 W. Walton Blvd.	Pontiac, Michigan.,	Crystreasur@aol.com (148) 335-1405.

Monthly Events

Event	Day/Time	Description	Location	Contact
Meet and Greet	Apr. 2 8-9 p.m.	Meets on the first Friday of every month at Caribou Coffee Company, Borders Book Shop, off Novi Road, just south of I-96. We have a general social gathering for all interested. Free. Circle of the Twelve Oaks.	Novi, Michigan	brown_wren@hotmail.com
Coffee Hour	Apr. 4 6-9 p.m.	Pagan social hour. First Sunday of every month. Java Hutt Café, 165 West Nine Mile Road. Magical Education Council	Ferndale, Michigan.	JMo4970872@cs.com
Full Moon Ritual	Apr. 5	Ritual begins promptly at 7 p.m. Our circles are small and limited to 12 participants. Those interested should contact the HPS.	Ann Arbor, Michigan	Http://home.earthlink.net/~nal
Full Moon Gatherings	Apr. 5 6:30 - 9 p.m.	Our group intention is to practice our learnings and share our teachings with others to enhance our community. Participate in rituals from a variety of traditions. .	Ann Arbor, Michigan	Valerie at Designwitch@earthlink.net
Moon Mist Rising Full Moon Celebration	Apr. 5 6:30 pm	Celebrate full moons with Moon Mist Rising at Bentmore Farm, 3655 West 32 Mile Road. Access via Rochester Road to 32 Mile, then east to Dequindre, south to Predmore, east to Farm or via Van Dyke, going west past Mound one mile. Call to confirm; bring folding chairs, bug spray, cover-ups, and a finger food snack to share.	Predmore, MI	Caridwyn 586 781-6403 Brian 586 752-2022
The Pagan Roundtable	Apr. 6 7:00 p.m.	Discussions and Networking for Witches, Druids, Magicians, and other assorted Pagans. First Tuesday of every month. Mt. Clemens Public Library, 150 Cass Avenue, Downstairs in the Community Room.	Mt. Clemens, Michigan	Arwen at StarEnd@aol.com . Please put Pagan Roundtable in your subject line.
Witches Meetup Day	Apr. 7 8 p.m	A series of monthly informal gatherings in local restaurants, part of an international effort to bring Witches together.	Various locations	http://witches.meetup.com
Druidic Coffee Hour	Apr. 23 7 - 9 p.m.	A time to get together with friends and discuss topics of interest to us all. All welcome. Borders Books, 3527 Washtenaw.	Ann Arbor, Michigan	www.msen.com/~robh/sl g/

Special Events

Event	Day/Time	Description	Location	Contact
Men's Weekend: Shadow and Light	April 16-18	Myth, ritual, drumming, experiential work, an opportunity for men to look into the eyes of the devils of culture, history, and expectation. Jim Carey, Sunray. Diana's Grove, in the hills and woods of central Missouri.	Salem, MO	PO Box 159, Salem MO 65560 www.dianasgrove.com 573-680-2400
Spirit Fayre	April 24-25	Psychics, readers, healers, vendors. Balancing mind, body and spirit. Hosted by Fayre Lady Fayers. \$5. 1619 Washington Center Road.	Fort Wayne, IN (Courtyard by Marriott)	www.fayrelady.com (260) 432-4978
Memorial Day Weekend	May 28-31, 2004	Aeon 3 Sacred Earth Retreat, celebrating the sanctity of the Web of Life and the power of Cooperative Community, at a 175 acre secluded nature sanctuary hidden in the green hills of Southern Indiana. Many workshops and ritual events. \$50 before Dec. 21.	Odonata, PO Box 2055, Bedford, Indiana 47421	aeonarc@yahoo.com www.magickmonkey.com
Beltaine Ritual	Sat. May 1 2-5 p.m.	Come join us as we honor Aren, our god of beauty, love, and freedom. There will be a raffle and potluck following the ritual All welcome. Druids of Shining Lakes Grove. Botsford Recreational Preserve, 3015 Miller Road (just west of the freeway).	Ann Arbor, MI	www.msen.com/~robh/slg
May Day Dancing	Sat., May 1 Dawn (5 a.m.)	Morris Dancers at the U-M join in singing and dancing: "We like to rise when the Sun she rises." Nichols Arboretum, on the path below the Geddes Road entrance, just east of U-M main campus.	Ann Arbor, MI	734-665-7291

Event	Day/Time	Description	Location	Contact
Beltaine Ritual	Sat., May 1 7 p.m.	Eclectic May Day gathering to welcome the spring and bring fertility to the earth. All welcome to join in singing, dancing, and general rejoicing. Crazy Wisdom Bookstore and Tea Room, 114 S. Main St.	Ann Arbor, MI	734-665-2757
Beltaine Gathering	Thurs., May 6 3-10 p.m.	Many talks, demonstrations, and magical workings, including tarot readings, reiki demonstrations, astrological readings, jewelry making, and many other fun things. Refreshments available. Isle of Avalon Books and Gifts, 738 S. Washington at Lincoln.	Royal Oak, MI	248-336-8228 Ladyofthelst4@yahoo.com
Midwest Witchcamp 2004	June 12-19	Dreamweaving sponsors this week of instruction and ritual at Diana's Grove, in Central Missouri. Mary Magdalene will provide inspiration. Themes include Elements, Oracle/Aspecting/Divination, Sacred Sexuality. \$585 includes tent space and meals.	Salem, MO	Dreamweaving, 3800 Rio Grande Blvd. NW Suite 124, Albuquerque NM 87107
Pagan Spirit Gathering	June 20-27	Week-long program of workshops, rituals, drumming, and much else, at Wisteria Campground. Circle Sanctuary, PO Box 219, Mt. Horeb, WI 53572. Www.circlesanctuary.org/events	Southern Ohio	(608) 924-2216
Parliament of the World's Religions	July 7-13	Major gathering of world religious leaders for an extensive exchange of views. Once held every century, the Parliament now meets every six years, and has become the largest and most comprehensive of the international interfaith conferences.	Barcelona, Spain	www.cpwr.org